Trump and the Sorcerer's Apprentice

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The tale of the sorcerer's apprentice is a timeless classic, illustrating the perils of wielding immense power without the wisdom to control it. The apprentice, initially brimming with enthusiasm and wonder, soon discovers that the magic he has unleashed is beyond his control, conjuring monstrous forces that threaten his very existence.

This allegory aptly applies to politicians who seize great power—such as the power of war—without the capacity to manage it. History shows that such leaders often fall victim to the very forces they have set in motion. This metaphor becomes starkly real in the cases of figures like Hitler, Zelensky, and perhaps President Donald Trump. The war in Ukraine exemplifies this, as those who ignited the conflict find themselves ensnared by it, much like the sorcerer's apprentice.

From this scenario, we can glean two fundamental lessons: first, that the history of humanity is predominantly a history of its wars; and second, that universal history serves as a universal judgment, as Hegel posited. It determines the victors and the vanquished, those who endure and those who fade into oblivion. "Historia magistra veritas"—history is the teacher of truth. The ongoing conflict in Ukraine is stripping away the veneer of sanctity and omnipotence from old leaders and their policies, revealing their true nature.

The situation of the United States is particularly striking. Once the world's superpower, the war in Ukraine is exposing its structural weaknesses. We need not even delve into the frailties of Europe or smaller nations. Hegel's assertion that "Universal history is the universal judgment" (Die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgerichte) underscores that while individual and governmental judgments are significant, the ultimate arbiter is the judgment of history. The events in Ukraine are a pivotal moment in world history, akin to the transformative impacts of the First and Second World Wars.

The theme of universal history is crucial when evaluating global leaders. It is almost comical to see leaders of minor nations believing their actions can alter the course of world history. These leaders are often a mix of innocence and pathos. Most presidents and national leaders do not shape national or international history; they are mere custodians of their traditions, striving to ideologically entertain their populace.

However, when we study universal history, we observe the great figures who have shaped the world, not just a region or a people, but the world itself. The current war in Ukraine is defining which leaders are truly global figures and which are not. President Vladimir Putin is emerging as a world leader, while President Donald Trump faces a dilemma: to ally with Putin and reshape the world, or retreat to his American base and risk losing the judgment of universal history. Similarly, Zelensky, like the sorcerer's apprentice, has been consumed by his own misguided actions, forgetting the wisdom of Sun Tzu: "Do not start a war you cannot win."

President Donald Trump appears to be a skilled rider on a frail horse. The United States lacks a robust economy, sustainable growth, and a coherent global military strategy. It lags behind Russia and China, its society is poorly educated, and its values have strayed from the capitalism that once defined it. Its political leaders seem like inept businessmen, frustrated by global realities. Consequently, U.S. policy is in evident decline. Trump, despite his abilities, rides a starving Rocinante. He must cease being a Don Quixote of La Mancha, tilting at windmills on a decrepit steed, which we now recognize as Europe and Ukraine.